

DRAFT Region 15: Richmond Regional Planning District

Introduction to PDC Area

The Richmond Regional Planning District is in the center of Virginia's urban corridor, which stretches from Northern Virginia, through the Richmond Metropolitan area, to the Hampton Roads Metropolitan areas. Comprising a mix of urban and rural jurisdictions, the area is experiencing rapid growth. This region consists of Charles City, Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, Goochland, New Kent and Powhatan counties, the city of Richmond and the town of Ashland. Area growth has occurred mainly in western Henrico County, southern Hanover County and northern and western Chesterfield County. Recently, development has occurred in the urban core along the James River in Richmond. Significant future growth is anticipated to extend southwesterly through Chesterfield County along the I-288 corridor, north along the I-95 corridor in Hanover, and along the I-64 and I-295 corridors through Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent and Charles City counties.

The region continues to experience a rapid growth rate. In 2000, the region had a population of 865,941. By 2005, the population had increased to 925,800, an increase of 6.9%. In fact, all the localities in the region experienced growth in that 5 year period except for the city of Richmond and Charles City County. Richmond City experienced the greatest population loss in the state from 2000 to 2005, with a loss of 4,500 people. Future growth in the overall region is anticipated to be rapid, with the population in the region projected to increase 27.2% to 1,101,400 in 2020 from its 2000 population level of 865,941. Chesterfield, Henrico and Hanover Counties are among the fastest growing in the state by numeric growth, with residents having increased by 26,600, 21,000 and 8,800, respectively, from 2000-2005. New Kent, Powhatan and Goochland Counties are also among the fastest growing in the state, with growth rates of 16.3%, 15.2% and 14.2%, respectively, over the same period. The Richmond Region is home to three of the top ten Virginia cities and counties when ranked by 2005 population. Chesterfield is ranked fourth, Henrico County is ranked fifth and the City of Richmond is ranked tenth.

Federal, state and local park and open space resources are found in the region. Federal properties include the Richmond National Battlefield Park, Presquile National Wildlife Refuge, and Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery. State-owned resources include Pocahontas State Park, Powhatan State Park, and the Game Farm Marsh, Powhatan, and Chickahominy River wildlife management areas. In addition, there are a number of locally-owned resources and sites with regional importance.

With the large numbers of people, urbanization and development in this region, there is a need to protect critical open space and provide more recreational opportunities. Actions should be encouraged that enhance the scenic qualities of the region's river and scenic road corridors, create greenways, develop parks and protect important natural areas, forests and farmland. This in turn will enhance the quality of life in the region.

Because the Richmond Planning District is predominantly urban, consideration should be given to urban issues with regard to parks and recreational opportunities. Planning for the urban population should include the needs of those who may have limited means of transportation. The major state and regional park systems that offer large areas of open space and natural area

experiences are not typically in urban settings. Thus greenways, urban open spaces and stream valleys can be reestablished in neglected areas to meet some of the demand for natural and passive areas in urban settings.

Geographic characteristics

Straddling two physiographic regions separated by the fall line -- the Coastal Plain to the east and the Piedmont to the west -- this region offers a variety of terrain and habitats. The Piedmont is characterized by rolling hills, meandering rivers and a mixture of forest and agricultural land uses in the undeveloped and sparsely developed portions. The Coastal Plain is flat with tidal rivers and streams, as well as tidal and some non-tidal wetlands.

Seven rivers flow through the area including the James, Appomattox, Chickahominy, South Anna, North Anna, Pamunkey and Little. All offer opportunities for recreation and provide a variety of habitats. Of these, the James is the largest and offers diverse recreation, especially at the Falls of the James in Richmond. This section of the river provides swift flowing white-water conditions supporting canoeing, kayaking and rafting activities. Other popular water-related activities include bank and wade angling, boat angling, tubing, wading and swimming, rock-hopping and nature walks and hiking..

Demand/survey findings

Demand is high in the area for activities such as walking, bicycling, playground use, soccer fields and water-related activities such as swimming and boating. Based on the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* and the facilities inventory, there is a need for water-related activities, playgrounds, swimming pools, football/soccer fields, hunting areas and other recreational opportunities. Results for the region are reported in a table on page 22.

Outdoor Recreation

The following are general recommendations related to outdoor recreation planning throughout the Commonwealth.

- To better serve Latino and Spanish speaking cultural groups, it is important to: establish trusting relationships; hire bilingual staff; advertise in the Spanish media; host Latino-themed events; create programs with the community, not for them, and invite, involve and include Hispanics in all aspects of service delivery. Similar strategies are effective for other cultural groups.
- Due to the increase in cultural and ethnic diversity in the Commonwealth, consideration should be given to making signs, literature and audio displays available in other languages.
- State and regional agencies should place a high priority on providing recreation opportunities to the Commonwealth's urban population in settings close to home.
- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A dedicated funding source

for the acquisition, management and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.

- To minimize user conflicts and increase economic and natural resource sustainability, activity user groups, along with local parks and recreation departments, should continue to educate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be cognizant of the impacts they have on others.
- State and local parks and recreation departments should teach responsible use of public lands through educational programs like *Leave No Trace* and *Tread Lightly!* These skills should be taught in several languages.
- DCR and other natural resource agencies should provide leadership and example in operations and maintenance on behalf of conservation and outdoor ethics.
- Property owners should employ management techniques that promote safe outdoor recreation environments.
- Communities and land managers should put forth a united front against crime by partnering with local law enforcement and organized user groups.

Land Conservation

The following land trusts are active in the Richmond Region: Capital Region Land Conservancy; The Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Friends of Chesterfield's Riverfront; James River Association; Historic Polegreen Church Foundation and the Williamsburg Land Conservancy. The following are general recommendations for land conservation:

- All localities should continue to promote the protection and preservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, the outright purchase of land or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in Chapter 3, Land Conservation.
- To meet the Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals for watershed protection and Governor Kaine's stated goal of preserving 400,000 acres of land in the state by 2010, strong state tax incentives for land conservation should be maintained and a dedicated source of funding should be established by the General Assembly.
- As population growth accelerates development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land preservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting preservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.

- Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.
- Land-conservation projects should offer a wide range of public benefits including water quality protection, habitat preservation, and public access to recreational opportunities.

Green Infrastructure Recommendations

The Conservation Fund defines Green Infrastructure as our Nation's natural life support system - an interconnected network of protected land and water that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources and contributes to the health and quality of life for America's communities and people. The following are general recommendations for green infrastructure in Virginia:

- Local governments should take the lead in securing green infrastructure through planning and rezoning.
- Regional and local governments should adopt and implement the green infrastructure planning model to ensure sustainable development of their communities and a high quality of life for future generations.
- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning, including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and obtained.

Programs

Trails & Greenways

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands, and other resources valued by the community, with businesses and neighborhoods.

The following are general recommendations for the Richmond Region with regard to Trails and Greenways:

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.

- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.
- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support, and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.
- Planning districts and local governments should consider the development of theme trails linking similar sites such as vineyards, historic districts and birding sites.
- Localities in the Richmond Region should seek guidance from the 2002 Richmond Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- Greenways and Trails listed in the Richmond Area MPO 2026 Long Range Transportation Plan should be considered for designation and development.

Trunkline trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross jurisdictional boundaries, to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public. Trunkline trails existing or underway in Virginia that pass through this region include:

1. The **East Coast Greenway**, proposed to span almost 3000 miles from Maine to Florida, aims to connect all the major cities of the East Coast along a continuous, off-road path. This trail will make use of waterfront esplanades, canal paths, railroad corridors and park paths for cyclists, hikers, skaters, equestrians and people with disabilities as it connects urban, suburban and rural America.
2. The **James River Heritage Trail** is proposed to follow America's Founding River from the Chesapeake Bay to the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The trail follows the old Kanawha Canal towpath, park trails, scenic riverside roadways and urban riverfront trails deep into the heart of Virginia. The trail includes the **Virginia Capital Trail** and trails through the **James River Park system** in Richmond.

The following are greenway/trail proposals specific to this region:

3. The abandoned **CSX Railway (formerly known as the Seaboard Airline Railroad) in eastern Chesterfield County** should continue to be developed for a rail-trail conversion to create a trail linking Chesterfield, Petersburg and Colonial Heights. This trail could provide needed recreational and training facilities for new staff deployed at Fort Lee.
4. Implement recommendations for the **Lower Appomattox River Trail and Greenway** and research cooperative regional management and operations alternatives for this resource that traverses over 400 acres in five jurisdictions. This water trail and greenway is a regional trail system along the river. When completed, the system will consist of bicycle and multi-purpose trails, linking natural, cultural, heritage and other linear open spaces in the region between Lake Chesdin and the City Point area in Hopewell. The goal of this 22-mile trail network is to link all recreational, cultural and natural features, and historic sites on both sides of the Appomattox River. A portion of the greenway is under development along Virginia State University property westward from Ettrick. Another portion eastward from the Brasfield Dam is also planned. Across the river, work is also underway in Petersburg (see Crater PDC section for more information).
5. **The Virginia Capital Trail** along Route 5, is a 52 mile trail linking resources between the current Capital of Virginia (Richmond) with the Colonial Capital of Virginia (Williamsburg). The trail, which has been approved by all local jurisdictions, should be constructed in a manner that preserves the historic and scenic beauty of its unique tree corridor.
6. **The Slave Trail** in Richmond should be completed to connect Ancarrow's Landing to the Lumpkins Jail archeological site as part of the African American Heritage Trail
7. A greenway should be developed along **Cannon Run Natural Area** to connect residents in Highland Park to the James River.
8. A greenway should be developed along **abandoned CSX rail line in Southside Richmond** to connect Maury Street Park to Westover Hills Community Center and Forest Hill Park.
9. Connect **Pocahontas State Park to the Government Center Trail**.

Blueways and Water Access (Boating, Beaches & Swimming, Pier and Bank Fishing, Natural Area)

The Richmond region is blessed with water resources that provide for a variety of recreation experiences. Boasting a blueway with class four and five rapids through the heart of downtown Richmond, James River Park was recently named Best Urban Park in the Readers' Choice Awards sponsored by Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine for two consecutive years. The lower Pamunkey River was recognized along with the Mattaponi as an American Canoe Association Recognized Water Trail in 2006. Established by the Mattaponi & Pamunkey Rivers Association, the water trail along these two tributaries of Virginia's York River features some of the last pristine fresh water paddling on the Atlantic seaboard.

Bills in the House and Senate were introduced in Spring of 2006 to designate The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail as the nation's first national historic *water* trail. Pending designation, this trail will open in 2007 when Jamestown celebrates its 400th anniversary. County commissioners, mayors, businesses, tourism agencies and non-profit organizations should continue to promote this trail along the James, Chickahominy and Pamunkey rivers to promote stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay.

Access to the region's rivers and streams is necessary for meeting water-related recreational demands. *The Chesapeake Bay Public Access Plan* could assist in determining the areas of greatest need for additional public access. Where opportunities are available, lands should be acquired or use agreements arranged to help meet the demand for public access. Where appropriate, portages should be created around dams and other river obstacles. Access considerations for the region include the following:

Beach Access Recommendations

- Cooperative agreements among localities and other agencies, as well as private landowners, are encouraged in order to meet the increasing need for public access to beaches and other water-related recreational resources.
- In cooperation with localities, state land management agencies should identify strategies to make additional waterfront resources available for public use.
- Adequate support facilities and services, such as restrooms, concessions, parking and maintenance should be a priority for existing and proposed public water and beach access areas.
- Public agencies need to acquire and/or maintain access to existing public beaches that may be jeopardized by changes in land use or development activities.

Water Trail/Blueway Recommendations

- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.

Water Access Recommendations

- Old ferry crossings/landing sites and bridges should be considered for opportunities for water access.

- Provide an additional 49 water access points in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Virginia to meet the commitments of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate boat-in only campgrounds on area rivers.
- In instances where public highway crossings of fishable and/or floatable waters are scheduled for renovation or relocation, the potential for providing parking areas and boat launching facilities should be evaluated.

The following are specific recommendations for water access in the region:

10. Although the region is rich in water resources, public access to those resources needs to be increased. Increasing public access also includes providing fishing access for the physically challenged. Developments at **Lake Harrison National Fish Hatchery** provide access for persons with disabilities. Another location where fishing access for persons with disabilities would be beneficial is the **Osborne Boat Landing** in Henrico County.
11. Plans are underway to develop a public boat ramp at **Lawrence Lewis Jr. Park** in Charles City County.
12. The **Dutch Gap Boat landing** on the **James River** in Chesterfield County should receive major renovations. The site frequently receives full capacity use. The launch area should be relocated further from commercial shipping lanes. Opportunities for an additional public powerboat launch in the vicinity of the James River and Falling Creek also should be investigated.
13. Additional boating access to the **Appomattox River in eastern Chesterfield County** should be investigated. Additional whitewater canoe access points should be established on the Appomattox River between the Brasfield Dam at Lake Chesdin and the Harvell Dam just beyond Virginia State University.
14. Additional boating access to the **Appomattox River in western Chesterfield County**.
15. The natural area along Big Creek on the **Pamunkey River in New Kent County** includes several hundred acres of natural waterways, swamps and marshlands, which provide considerable opportunity for water-oriented recreational pursuits. A public boat ramp at Big Creek would be an asset.
16. In 1988, the General Assembly officially designated the **James River Batteau Festival Trail** from Lynchburg to the City of Richmond. Although the annual festival currently stops in Maidens, efforts are underway to bring batteaus back into the city. Localities along the route should work towards conservation and rehabilitation of remaining navigational structures from the days of the batteau. The current condition of the James River and Kanawha Canal within Richmond prevents canal boats and batteaus from passing by the Falls of the James, through downtown, and into the tidal portion of the James River. The annual James River Batteau Festival and other significant tourist attractions would benefit from the availability of a functional canal and navigation system around the dams and falls at the city

Historic and Landscape Resources

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.
- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.

The following are specific recommendations for historic properties in the region:

17. Chesterfield County's proposed expansion of the **Eppington Plantation** site will help to preserve the site's historical landscape and provide public access to the Appomattox River. Chesterfield has also acquired additional sites at **Henricus**, the second settlement in Virginia; **Mid-Lothian Coal Mines**, an early mining and railroad site; and Falling Creek Ironworks, a 1619 early industrial site. Preservation of historical and natural features should be considered as well as development to allow for interpretation and enjoyment by site visitors.
18. The old canal locks and railroad embankments, recalling the **Gayton Coal Mines** and other historic interests, plus the heavily wooded swamps and ravines along Tuckahoe Creek would provide a natural setting for outdoor recreational and ecological study serving Henrico and Goochland counties.

Scenic Resources

The Richmond area's unique scenic quality and sense of place is derived from tidal and fall-line rivers and marshes, rural farmland and other areas of undeveloped open space, and the urban centers. This varied character, graced with significant natural and historic resources, maintains our economic vitality as a tourist attraction, and also as an attractive place to live and work.

Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.

Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.

Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.

Specific scenic corridors that are recognized in Virginia should receive consideration by local and regional plans for viewshed management. Management of Virginia's scenic resources is linked to the economic prosperity of the state as it relates to tourism and the overall aesthetic character of the Commonwealth for business, industry and residents.

19. Preserve historic viewsheds along the James River throughout the region and especially the viewshed from Libby Hill, which mirrors the view to the Thames in Richmond, England and resulted in the naming of Richmond, Virginia.

Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways

In this region, Routes 5, 6, 617 and 711 are designated Virginia Byways. Route 5, which is also part of the Interstate Bicycle Route 76, connects the Richmond region with the historic resources in Williamsburg and Yorktown. The road also provides access to the historic plantations along the James River. River Road and Route 6 are designated Virginia Byways from Henrico County westward to Nelson County.

Portions of Routes 606, 608, 609 and 249 in New Kent County have been newly classified as part of the Virginia Byways.

A bill to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Washington-Rochambeau Route as a National Historic Trail was introduced in both houses of Congress in July 2006 and is currently in committee. This 600-mile route was followed by the American and French armies in 1781 and 1782 under Generals George Washington and the comte de Rochambeau as they traveled to, and returned from, the siege and victory at Yorktown. This route, which passes by Hanover Courthouse and through New Kent County en route to Yorktown, has also been designated as a special highway by the state.

There has been a tremendous interest in thematic trails including, Civil War trails, the Wilderness Road Trail, the Birding and Wildlife Trails, the Revolutionary War trails, the African-American Heritage Trail system and other driving tour routes. The next logical step after the *Scenic Roads in Virginia* map would be to develop a series of regional maps or booklets that describe and help locate the resources and services found in all sections of the state.

The following are general recommendations related to scenic highways and Virginia Byways:

- Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways.
- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.

The following roads are recommended for designation as a Virginia Byway:

20. Route 249 and Route 60 in eastern Henrico County.

21. Route 604 in Chesterfield, Powhatan and Amelia Counties.
22. Route 522 in Northern Powhatan County.

Scenic Rivers

Portions of the James, Appomattox and Chickahominy rivers have been designated state Scenic Rivers. The James was the first Virginia River to receive some type of official recognition; in 1972, the city of Richmond secured designation of a portion of the James within the city as an Historic River by the Virginia General Assembly. In 1984, the designation was extended through downtown Richmond -- a formal declaration as a state Scenic River followed. This eight-mile section is named the Historic Falls of the James Scenic River. Approximately five miles of the Appomattox River below Lake Chesdin was designated a state Scenic River in 1977. The Appomattox River designation was extended 1.2 miles to 100 feet from the base of the Lake Chesdin Dam by the 1998 Virginia General Assembly. In 1990, an approximate 10-mile section of the Chickahominy River, from Route 360 to the junction of the Hanover-Henrico-New Kent county line in Hanover County, was designated a state Scenic River.

The following are general recommendations related to scenic rivers:

- Local governments should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.
- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g., land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.

State Scenic Rivers should be protected as a unique regional resource. Inappropriate development that compromises the scenic qualities of the river and the enjoyment of its natural beauty should be discouraged. Appropriate setbacks and buffers should be incorporated into plans to assure the preservation of the river corridor, and to protect water quality. The following river segments have been legislatively designated as a Virginia Scenic River.

23. The James River from the west city limits of Richmond to Orleans Street. Impacts to the James River from proposed commercial development along the riverbanks should be carefully evaluated.
24. The Chickahominy River from Route 360 to the New Kent, Henrico and Hanover County line. Impacts to the Chickahominy River from proposed commercial development along the riverbanks should be carefully evaluated.

The following river segments have been evaluated and been found worthy of designation as a **Virginia Scenic River:**

25. The **Chickahominy River** at the New Kent, Henrico and Charles City County line to the Route 618 Bridge.
26. The **James River** from Orleans Street to Surry County.

27. The **North Anna River** from Route 738 to Route 1 at Chandler Crossing.

28. The **James River** from Wingina to Maidens.

29. The **South Anna River** from Route 673 to Route 686.

30. The **Pamunkey River** from Route 614 to Pampatike Landing.

The following river segments should be evaluated to determine their suitability as a **Virginia Scenic River**:

31. The **South Anna River** from Lake Gordonsville to Route 673.
32. The **South Anna River** from Route 678 to the confluence with the Pamunkey River.
33. The **Chickahominy River** from Route 618 to the James River.
34. The **Pamunkey River** in its entirety.
35. The **North Anna River** from Lake Anna to Route 738 (Anderson Bridge)
36. The **North Anna River** from Route 1 at Chandler Crossing to the confluence with the Pamunkey River.
37. The **James River** from Maidens to Watkins Landing.

Watersheds

(List of local watershed groups will be included in a later draft) Will be receiving it from Soil & Water watershed offices).

General watershed recommendation:

Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative.

Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations

Outdoor Environmental Education needs are being assessed for each region. The information about potential outdoor education facility needs will be identified in a later draft.

Federal Facilities

National Parks

The **Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site** is located in the City of Richmond.

The **Richmond National Battlefield Tredegar Iron Works Visitor Center** is a key tourist destination. Richmond National Battlefield Park has been working with the Civil War Trail Program, to connect Civil War battlefields, and is working with the City of Richmond and other museums to establish an urban trail of Civil War sites.

National Parks Recommendations

- Continue to develop multi-modal connections to National Park Service sites as a component of an interconnected, statewide system of trails and greenways. Support efforts underway at parks such as Petersburg, Appomattox and Richmond that are currently engaged in efforts to link battlefields, historic sites, parks and communities.
- Work with state agencies to elevate battlefield protection in various land conservation, scenic viewshed and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilizes partnerships to identify, prioritize and develop strategies to protect critical resources.
- Continue collaborative efforts through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails Program and Potomac Heritage National Scenic to connect people to heritage, outdoor recreation and educational opportunities and resources. The National Park Service coordinates the Chesapeake Bay Gateway program (www.baygateways.net) that promotes historic and environmental focus on water access. As of April 2006, sites in the region are Lawrence Lewis Jr Park in Charles City County, Dutch Gap and the Lower James River Water Trail, and Captain John Smith's Adventures on the James River.

National Wildlife Refuges & Fish Hatcheries

In 1992, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made an agreement with Charles City County, the Department of Conservation and Recreation and other state agencies to explore providing additional opportunities for recreational and environmental education at the **Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery**. As part of the challenge grant, the USFWS permitted construction of barrier free recreational fishing and picnic areas. This construction included two fishing piers, a boat dock, accessible asphalt paths, parking areas, and picnic tables. In addition, a watchable wildlife area and a nature trail extension were developed. These projects, most of which were cost shared by state and local agencies, were found to be compatible with the mission of the hatchery and resulted in only minor environmental disturbance. Plans for additional facilities are dependent on funding, compatibility with the mission of the USFWS and Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery, and environmental considerations.

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge is a 1,329-acre island in the James River, located in the northeast corner of Chesterfield County. Historically, a USFWS-operated ferry provided access for pre-scheduled groups to view wildlife, enjoy the 0.75-mile interpretive trail, and participate in a limited deer-hunting program. In 2001, concern for visitor safety prompted a thorough review of ferry operations by the USFWS and the U.S. Coast Guard. Until safety concerns are resolved, the ferry will be unavailable for public transportation. Presquile National Wildlife Refuge has been put into "Preservation Status" due to decreased funding for manpower and projects. Details of preservation strategies are being developed for this refuge. More info on this at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=51623>

The following are Richmond Region National Wildlife Refuges & Fish Hatcheries Recommendations

38. The **Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery** should be sufficiently funded to remain in operation in order to maintain its important function in restoring anadromous fish to the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers, as well as to provide public recreation opportunities.
39. The USFWS should continue to work with partners, including the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to provide safe public access to **Presquile National Wildlife**

Refuge for compatible public use, including wildlife observation and deer hunting as funding allows.

State Facilities

State parks

The approval of the 2002 General Obligation Bond referendum resulted in funds that benefit the entire state park system. Funds were allocated for new state park acquisitions and for the acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parks, thus providing continued protection of dwindling open space. The bond also provided funding for numerous new facilities, improvements to existing facilities and trails, and for the development of new trails.

In accordance with Code Section 10.1-200.1 - State park master planning, master plans must be developed for new state parks prior to the implementation of any new development. Existing master plans are to be re-evaluated every five years. The master planning process requires public involvement. An advisory committee, comprised of local officials, representatives from various user groups, businesses, tourism, adjacent landowners, and others who are stakeholders in the site, convenes to participate throughout the master planning process. Public meetings are held to gain public input in addition to the presentation to the Board of Conservation and Recreation, also open to the public. Any significant change to a state park master plan or park additions in excess of \$500,000 requires public input.

State parks are listed on the Wildlife and Birding Trail. Numerous park sites participate in regional and local initiatives such as trail development and programming.

Due to the extremely high demand for public access to the waters of the commonwealth, any waterfront property that becomes available on the major tidal rivers or their tributaries in the region should be evaluated for potential acquisition and development as a regional or state park. Any site acquired and developed on these waters would also help to meet the commitments of the 2000 Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

Pocahontas State Park (7,724 acres) is located in Chesterfield County. Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), this was the first recreational park in the Richmond-Petersburg-Hopewell area. The National Park Service donated the facility to Virginia State Parks in 1946, making it the largest Virginia state park. Traditional offerings of the park include a 114 site full service campground; picnicking and 7 picnic shelters; an aquatic recreation center; over 50 miles of trail and forest roads for hiking, biking, bridal or multiuse; nature and cultural interpretive and educational programs; fishing on Swift Creek and Beaver Lakes; and non-gas powered boating is allowed on Swift Creek Lake. The park's CCC Museum is located in an original CCC building and highlights the accomplishments of the CCC across the state. The park also has the Heritage Amphitheater, which holds up to 4,000, an outdoor venue that accommodates concerts, stage performances and other large gatherings. The Heritage Center is a meeting and conference facility adjacent to the amphitheater. Also, available are Algonquian Ecology Camp and Swift Creek Camp, which offer 2 to 4 cabin groups and an activity-dining hall with kitchen.

Funding from the 2002 GOB was allocated to expand the campground and construct camping cabins, to improve roads and parking, and to construct an equestrian center. The park has also been able to use GOB funds to improve existing trails.

40. Opportunities exist for **Pocahontas** to be located on the East Coast Greenway. Efforts should to connect the park to the Government Center Trail. Cooperative programming with the county should continue as relate to programs offered at the amphitheater.

41. **Powhatan State Park** on the Historic James River (1564 acres), located in Powhatan County, is a new park created by the General Assembly in 2003 by a land transfer from the Beaumont Juvenile Correction Center to DCR. The park has 2 miles of frontage on the James River which increases the much needed public access for boating and fishing. The park's completed master plan calls for the development of a traditional style state park. The first phase of the master plan calls for the development of a multi-use trails, picnicking, river access for boating and fishing, canoe-in primitive camping, roads and support facilities. At full build out, the park will provide a full service campground, an equestrian campground, cabins, a visitor education center, additional picnicking facilities and river access. Funding is needed for development as well as operational and staffing costs.

42 To meet the growing need for additional recreation areas and water access, consideration should be given to acquiring a potential state park **site along the Pamunkey River**. It could provide a variety of traditional offerings, access to the river, as well as an area of cooperative development with the localities for local programs and facilities.

Natural Areas

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has, as of March 2001, documented 290 occurrences of 94 rare species and natural communities in the Richmond Regional Planning District. Fourteen species are globally rare and five are federally threatened or endangered. Eighty conservation sites have been identified in the district; only 10 (13%) have received any level of protection through ownership or management by state, federal and non-government organizations.

DCR recommends that the 70 unprotected conservation sites be targeted for future protection efforts. The appropriate method of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas, developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner, securing a conservation easement through a local land trust, acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust, dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner, or acquiring the site as a state natural area preserve. For more discussion of the Natural Heritage Program, [see page ??](#).

Cumberland Marsh Natural Area Preserve is located in New Kent County and is owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy. Facilities include a handicapped accessible boardwalk and observation platform with interpretive signs. This marsh supports perhaps the greatest biological diversity on the Pamunkey River.

State Forests

The following are general recommendations for State Forests in the Richmond Region:

- The Department of Forestry (DOF) will coordinate with, and seek the assistance of, local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use. Online maps reflecting recreational uses are being developed for all state forests. All forests currently

have hiking trails or forest roads available for hiking, and there is a canoe launch at Zoar State Forest.

- Localities should work with DOF to stress the importance of the urban canopy and help localities set goals.
- Localities should promote the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy and work with DOF to develop strategies to enhance the urban forest.

The following are specific recommendations for the Richmond Region:

43. Develop plans for forest-managed hiking trails and canoe launching facilities at **Crawford State Forest**.
44. Develop a canoe trail to connect the **Crawford State Forest** with the New Kent Forestry Center.

DGIF Wildlife Management Areas

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries operates three wildlife management areas for public use in the region. Kittiewan Wildlife Preserve is not open to the public. Additional trail development within the wildlife management areas would help meet local demand for passive recreation.

45. More than 5,000 acres have been acquired at the **Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area** in Charles City County. Consideration should be given to expanding recreational opportunities, particularly along the Morris Creek portion of the property. An additional 103.5 acres recently acquired across from **Game Farm Marsh** off Chickahominy Lake in New Kent County will enable the Department to offer more opportunities for waterfowl hunting, fishing, boating and wildlife viewing.
46. Recreational developments should be considered at the **Powhatan Wildlife Management Area** in Powhatan County. Opportunities exist for increasing water-oriented recreation at the two lakes within the area and along the Appomattox River.

Transportation

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints. (www.vtrans.org)
- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.

- Local government should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health departments into all phases of land use planning.

Virginia is home to more of the United States Numbered Bicycle Route system than any other state. Since both USBR 1 and USBR 76 cross the state, Virginia hosts about 41 percent of the total USBR system. USBR 1 crosses the state north-south from Arlington to the North Carolina border near Kerr Reservoir, and USBR 76 crosses east-west from Yorktown to the Kentucky border in Dickenson County. These federal routes are officially recognized by AASHTO, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. These routes are shown on VDOT's official County Maps, and signed in the field.

In addition, Virginia also hosts parts of three other long-distance bicycle routes recognized by Adventure Cycling Association, which is dedicated to establishing a national system of long-distance routes. The Trans-America Bicycle Trail crosses the country from Oregon to Virginia, and shares the same alignment as USBR 76 in Virginia. The Maine to Virginia Bicycle Route runs approximately 150 miles from Washington, D.C. to Virginia, generally along the same alignment as USBR 1, and the Virginia to Florida Bicycle Route covers 130 miles from Richmond to the North Carolina state line at Suffolk.

47. Interstate **Bike Route 1** should be enhanced and signage maintained.

48. Interstate **Bike Route 76** should be enhanced and signage maintained.

Other State Facilities (Colleges, Universities, Estuarine Research Reserves)

There is potential for other state-owned lands to be used for recreation, or managed as conservation lands. All **community college properties** should be explored to determine if undeveloped portions of those properties could be used to meet the recreation/conservation needs of the region. All Virginia **Department of Corrections properties** should be similarly evaluated. The following state-owned properties contain undeveloped land that may have potential for recreational use. Each site should be assessed, and cooperative use agreements developed where appropriate.

49. The **Rice Property**, located in Charles City County and owned by Virginia Commonwealth University, should be evaluated to determine its potential to meet identified educational and recreational needs of the region.

50. While a portion of the state-owned **Elko Tract** in eastern Henrico County has been transferred to the Henrico County Industrial Development Authority, consideration should be given to utilizing undeveloped portions of the property to meet recreational, environmental education and open space needs of the region. The White Oak Swamp Natural Area was part of the original Elko Tract. **White Oak Swamp** in eastern Henrico County is of historical and ecological significance. The area contains wetlands rich in plant and animal life, and gently rolling uplands suitable for a variety of recreational activities.

Local Parks & Recreation Programs

Each locality in the region has a full-time parks and recreation department with the exception of Powhatan County and the Town of Ashland. According to the Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures, Year Ended June 30, 2005, per capita spending on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: Charles City, \$47.28; Chesterfield, \$25.19; Hanover, \$27.50; Henrico, \$49.56; Goochland, \$19.55; New Kent, \$18.09; Powhatan, \$4.71; the city of Richmond, \$35.88; and the town of Ashland, \$12.50. This compares to a statewide per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$55.31, including \$85.51 from Towns, \$43.75 from counties, and \$76.45 per capita spending on parks and recreation from Cities in Virginia.

- Localities should appoint a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation programs. This is most important in localities where no parks and recreation department exists.
- Commitments to the maintenance, management and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public-private partnerships. The establishment of a “friends group,” which could possibly evolve into a “park foundation,” should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of school-park cooperative agreements could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.
- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.

Regional parks

Regional parks are local parks that due to their size, location or offerings have a regional significance.

In 2002, the County of Chesterfield adopted the 2020 updated Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan and Public Facilities Plan to guide the acquisition and development of the park system. The new plan addressed key issues of aging facilities, land acquisition ahead of growth and a reclassification of park and open space types to allow a more detailed analysis of resources and projected needs. The County has completed master plans for several new parks: Horner Park in western Chesterfield, **Brown and Williamson Conservation Area** in eastern Chesterfield on the James River, **Goynes Park** in central Chesterfield, and **Robious Landing Park**, with approximately 110 acres of parkland south of the James River in northwestern Chesterfield County. The site includes forested shoreline and has significant ecological features and natural beauty. Passive recreational facilities for access and enjoyment of the river have been developed to include two and a half miles of walking trails. A recent Bond Referendum will allocate over 20 million dollars for facility renovation and new construction within the park system.

In 1999 the County of Henrico adopted the Update 2015 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. The plan provides a comprehensive approach to parks and open space planning. The Update 2015 Plan includes a revised parks, recreation and open space classification system to permit a more detailed analysis of resources, protection issues, and parks and recreation facility needs. The county has also completed master plans for a number of proposed park facilities including **Meadowview Park**, located on the Chickahominy River in central Henrico; **Deep Bottom Park** and the **Meade Property**, both located on the James River in eastern Henrico; and **Twin Hickory Park**, located in northwestern Henrico. It is hopeful that funds for park acquisition and developments will become available.

51. In 2004, New Kent County adopted the Master Plan for Parks and Recreation. A 100-acre site off Crisscross Road near I-64 will be developed for active recreation.
52. Lands along approximately six miles of the **James River** through Richmond have been acquired by the city and improved for the public's access and enjoyment. Extension of the parkland westward through Henrico and Chesterfield counties would provide valuable open space and recreational opportunities to area residents and help to protect the James River corridor. The City should consider placing these lands under a conservation easement to provide future protection from development.
53. Along Falling Creek in Chesterfield County, the 167-acre **Stratton Property** near Chippenham Parkway was recently leased from the state for passive recreation development.
54. The **Belmont Park-Horse Swamp** area in Henrico County would be a combination of two sites linked by trails. Both areas are easily accessible and particularly attractive for regional recreational development..
55. The recently approved master plan for **Four Mile Creek Park** in Henrico County should be implemented.

56. Continue development of **Irvin G. Horner Park** on Otterdale Creek in Chesterfield County for active and passive recreational activities.
57. The recently approved master plan for the 221-acre **March Park** in Hanover County should be implemented to provide passive recreation within this natural area close to Ashland.
58. Lands along the scenic **South Anna River** in Hanover County have potential for regional park development.
59. Land adjacent to the whitewater fall line section of the **Little River** in Hanover County is especially scenic and is suitable for regional park development.
60. A regional park located along the scenic **Chickahominy River** near Providence Forge in Charles City County would complement the existing Chickahominy River Wildlife Management Area farther downstream, and help to preserve an important natural resource.
61. Continue development of **Lake Chesdin Park** in southern Chesterfield County, approximately 200 acres of parkland on the north side of the **Appomattox River** that includes forested shoreline as well as some potential inland community park space and has significant ecological features and natural beauty. Development of passive recreational facilities along the lake should be a priority.
62. Henrico County has acquired more than 500 acres along the **Chickahominy River**, which has the potential to become a significant natural area and park.
63. **Diascund Reservoir** in New Kent County is located in natural, forested surroundings. It has potential for the development of water-oriented and water-enhanced recreational facilities.
64. The recently approved master plan for **Taylor Park** off Route 54 in Hanover County should begin to provide active and passive recreation for area residents on this 53-acre parcel.
65. The City of Richmond, through the Richmond Riverfront Development Corporation, is proceeding with the development of the **James River and Kanawha Canal** system through the area. The project provides the opportunity for people to enjoy a renovated canal system. Walking trails, boat rides providing access to historic areas and other amenities are included in the project. The National Park Service has relocated its Richmond Battlefield Park Headquarters to the Tredegar Iron Works complex, which is adjacent to the canal.
66. The fastest growing community in Chesterfield County is the **Spring Run** area. Chesterfield County should acquire and develop a regional park site in the nearby Winterpock area to serve the Spring Run community as well as the southwestern quadrant of the county.
67. Chesterfield County has acquired approximately 800 acres of property on the James River at the **Dutch Gap Conservation Area**. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has a cooperative management agreement with the county to ensure enhancement of wildlife and habitat on the site. Further development of amenities to promote conservation, improved river boating access, and natural resource interpretation of the site should occur.

68. Chesterfield County has identified the need for a **regional park in the Midlothian area**. Land acquisition is critical due to fast growth. An accelerated program to acquire and develop general recreation is needed.

Private Sector

Due to the populations and the expected growth in this region, the opportunities for public-private partnerships, as well as private investment in recreation, are numerous. The demand for access to resources and facilities is far greater than the present supply. The seven rivers in this region provide opportunity for water-based developments, access and services. Campgrounds, golf courses, tennis courts and swimming pools can be provided by the private sector. Private lands could provide open space and greenways through voluntary granting of open space and conservation easements, management agreements, or other means to help meet the need for activities such as walking and bicycling.

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
- Recreational use agreements and/or easements should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation.
- Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to spread the word about the Virginia Landowner Liability Law to existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation. This law reduces the risk of claims associated with recreational use of private lands, and may be especially applicable for trail and greenway development.
- Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support corporate recognition programs and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.
- There is a need to provide areas for the use of 4-wheel-drive, off-road recreational vehicles. This may be an opportunity for the private sector to make use of lands for recreation that may not be productive for other uses.
- The **Richmond Region** should be considered as a location for a gateway hostel convenient to mass transit and amenities of the urban core.